United Nations

Daily Highlights

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THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Security Council meets tonight to act on draft resolution demanding that Bosnian Government and Bosnian Serbs conclude immediate cease-fire agreement, if adopted, resolution would demand Bosnian Serb withdrawal from safe area of Gorazde.

- Security Council extends UNOMIL mandate for six months, subject to reviews by 18 May and 30 June; calls on Liberian parties to install Transitional Government so that September elections can go ahead.

- Secretary-General, in report to Security Council, says complete withdrawal of UNAMIR could lead to heavy loss of life in Rwanda and ethnic violence in neighbouring countries.

- Secretary-General responds positively to French proposal that he convene high-level international conference on former Yugoslavia.

- United Nations humanitarian convoy leaves Sarajevo for Gorazde; death toll mounts as Bosnian Serbs continue shelling of town.

- Special Coordinator for Sarajevo says draft plan of action for restoration of city services should be completed by end of April.

- Preparatory Committee for Population Conference approves three chapters of draft programme of action; to consider family planning and reproductive health matters further.

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The Security Council met late this afternoon to take action on a draft resolution concerning the situation in Gorazde. By that draft, the Council would demand that the Bosnian Government and the Bosnian Serb party conclude an immediate cease-fire agreement, under the auspices of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR), throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina, leading to an agreement on a complete cessation of hostilities. It would also condemn

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attacks against Gorazde by the Bosnian Serbs, and demand that they withdraw their forces and weapons to a distance from which they would no longer threaten the safe area.

Also by the draft resolution, the Council would invite the Secretary-General to take the necessary steps to ensure that UNPROFOR was able, within the limits of its resources, to monitor the situation in Gorazde and respect for any cease-fire. The Council would also demand the immediate release of any United Nations personnel still being held by the Bosnian Serbs and unimpeded freedom of movement for UNPROFOR.

The draft underlined the urgent need to intensify efforts towards an overall political settlement agreed by all parties in the former Yugoslavia, particularly in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It also called for coordination and close consultation between the representatives of the United States and the Russian Federation and those of the United Nations and the European Union, with the aim of bringing together current diplomatic initiatives.

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The Security Council today extended the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) until 22 October, noting that elections were scheduled to take place in that country by 7 September. In unanimously adopting resolution 911 (1994), the Council decided to review the situation in Liberia and UNOMIL's role there by 18 May. That review would consider the installation of the National Transitional Government and progress towards implementing the peace process.

The Council also decided to review, by 30 June, whether there had been enough progress in implementing the revised timetable of the Cotonou Peace Agreement to warrant continued UNOMIL involvement. That review would focus on the Transitional Government's operation, disarmament and demobilization, and preparations for September's national elections.

The Council called on the Liberian parties to install the Transitional Government by 18 May, including the full cabinet and the national assembly, so that the elections could go ahead. It urged them to stop fighting and to cooperate with the Economic Community of West African States' Monitoring Observer Group (ECOMOG) to complete the disarmament process. It also called on them to ensure the safety of UNOMIL observers and civilian staff. The Council encouraged Member States to contribute to the Trust Fund for implementation of the Cotonou Agreement or to ECOMOG, and to assist in humanitarian, development and electoral activities in Liberia.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has said that complete withdrawal of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) could lead to heavy loss of life there and to ethnic violence in neighbouring countries. He also said that there was no prospect of a cease-fire in Rwanda in the coming days, and that UNAMIR personnel could not be left at risk indefinitely when

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there was no possibility of their performing the tasks for which they had been dispatched. In a report on UNAMIR dated 20 April, he outlined three options for the Security Council's consideration.

The first option envisaged immediate and massive reinforcement of UNAMIR and a change in its mandate which would allow it to coerce the Government of Rwanda and the Rwandese Patriotic Front into a cease-fire. That action would make possible the distribution of humanitarian aid throughout Rwanda and would help prevent the violence from spreading to neighbouring countries. The Mission would require several thousand extra troops, and possibly enforcement powers under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter.

According to the second option, the Force Commander and necessary staff would remain in Kigali to act as an intermediary between the two sides with a view to a cease-fire agreement. The Special Representative for Rwanda would also continue efforts aimed at the resumption of the Arusha peace process. An infantry company would be needed to provide security, while a number of military observers would be deployed to monitor the situation. The UNAMIR would thus continue to exist at a strength of about 270.

The Secretary-General said he did not favour the third option -- complete withdrawal of UNAMIR -- as there was little hope that the parties would thus agree to end the violence and mass killings. However, he emphasized that the Government of Rwanda, or its successor, and the Front were ultimately responsible for restoring peace to their country.

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The Secretary-General has replied positively to a letter from French President François Mitterrand asking him to convene a high-level international conference on the former Yugoslavia, a United Nations spokesman announced today. The Secretary-General has informed the Security Council of the initiative, which is similar to one he discussed with Council members last June.

The Secretary-General has also been briefed about United States President Bill Clinton's iniative regarding the former Yugoslavia, and is aware that consultations are under way on the convening of an international summit, the spokesman continued. The Secretary-General has always believed that the question of the former Yugoslavia can only be resolved as a whole and through negotiations. He supports the efforts under way and will be consulting with the Governments concerned in the coming days, the spokesman added.

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A United Nations convoy consisting of 100 peace-keepers and a 40-man Nordic medical unit this morning left Sarajevo for Gorazde, a spokesman for the Organization announced today. The convoy was carrying urgently needed humanitarian supplies for the besieged Bosnian town.

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Bosnian Serb forces continued their attacks on Gorazde today, with deliberate shelling of non-military targets, the spokesman said. The town's hospital was hit by two rounds of tank fire, resulting in numerous casualties. United Nations military observers on the ground described Bosnian Serb allegations that the facility was a military target as "preposterous".

The spokesman went on to say that all United Nations personnel being held by the Bosnian Serbs had been released, although a Dutch military observer missing since last week was still unaccounted for. The Bosnian Serbs had also removed land mines from around weapons-storage sites within the Sarajevo exclusion zone.

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The Special Coordinator for Sarajevo, William Eagleton, today said that he expected a draft plan of action for the restoration of essential public services in the city to be completed by the end of the month. He told correspondents at Headquarters that a meeting of "key players" would be held by the middle of next month to discuss the plan and to prepare for its implementation.

Mr. Eagleton said that while it was too early to estimate the plan's financial requirements, a draft report by the United Kingdom and the United States suggested that initial emergency work would cost several hundred million dollars. Reconstruction of Sarajevo would be a much larger undertaking and would require a political solution in Bosnia and Herzegovina. He noted that a special trust fund had been established for the city, although no contributions had yet been received.

Sarajevo now received only 20 per cent of its normal water supply, although the electricity situation was somewhat better, the Special Coordinator went on to say. A major effort would be made to restore gas supplies before next winter. Infrastructure and utilities ran through different sectors in the city, and the two parties there had pledged to cooperate with efforts to restore services. Sarajevo had a great deal of skilled manpower, but resources and equipment were badly needed, he added.

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The Preparatory Committee for the International Conference on Population and Development yesterday approved three chapters of its draft programme of action, but left areas on family planning and sexual and reproductive health open for further consideration. The three chapters covered partnership with the non-governmental sector; national action; and gender equality and the empowerment of women. The Committee was meeting in plenary after almost two weeks of working group negotiations.

Dr. Nafis Sadik, Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and Secretary-General of the Conference, told the Committee that the

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centrality of the family and the rights of women must be recognized in decisions on the draft final document. Too often, women had only been spoken for, if at all, by men largely unaware of their realities, she said.

The International Conference will be held in Cairo next September under the theme of population and sustainable development. It will examine population and related issues, such as gender equality and the empowerment of women, and their implications for social and economic development. The Conference will also address the issues of reproductive health and family planning as human rights.

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